



Maine Farm Safety Program

Bulletin #2314

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Kitchen Safety

There are three basic rules to remember when working in the kitchen. Be on the look out for potential hazards. They are always present. Use safe work procedures. Accidents can be prevented by doing things the right way and not taking short cuts. Use protective equipment when needed. This will also help to prevent accidents.

◆ **Hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment**

Always wash your hands before beginning to work in the kitchen. Also, wash your hands at regular intervals as necessary while you work. Keep nails clean to prevent the spread of germs. Cover any cuts with waterproof dressings. Change the dressings when work in the kitchen is finished. Remove any jewelry that might get in the way and tie back hair. Never wear dangling sleeves that may get caught in appliances or catch on fire.

◆ **Lifting and Carrying**

Use the proper lifting techniques when lifting and carrying heavy loads in the kitchen. Clear the path you intend to take. When lifting, bend the knees and use the legs to lift. Be careful when carrying liquids, especially hot ones. Never lift beyond your own lifting capacity.

◆ **Knives**

Knives are one of the most useful tools in the kitchen, but also one of the most dangerous. Always cut away from the body on a proper cutting surface. Keep the blades sharp and clean. Keep the knife grips

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◆ **Clean spills promptly.**

◆ **Use proper lifting techniques.**

◆ **Maintain good hygiene practices.**



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clean. Never leave knives lying in water as it can injure an unsuspecting dishwasher. When wiping blades, always point the cutting edge away from the hand. Lay knives flat and away from counter edges. If a knife should fall, do not try to catch it. Pick it up after it has fallen. Always return clean knives to their proper storage areas when done working with them.

◆ **Falls and Spills**

Always clean up messes and spills to prevent falls. Close cabinet doors and drawers when done. Use a sturdy step ladder to reach for things. Do not step on objects that are unstable.

◆ **Stoves**

Stoves can be a source of many accidents in the kitchen. Always make sure the pilot lights work on gas stoves. If they are not, turn the dials to off and wait for the gas to disperse before relighting. Never leave pan handles over burners. Keep hot dishes and crockery out of reach of others to avoid burns. Use oven mitts when handling hot dishes. Round pot holders or mitts are preferable. When folded diagonally, square mitts can get into the flame and catch on fire.

Use caution when working with steam to prevent burns.

◆ **Fire**

Kitchen fires can be serious. They often involve igniting combustibles and flare-ups of things being cooked. Defects in ovens, burners, electrical and gas connections are also hazardous.

Keep flammable materials away from range or stove. If the stove is near a window, use short, flame-resistant curtains. Do not put napkins, towels or paper containers on the range. Watch cooking pots and use lowest practical heat. Use care when lighting ovens on gas ranges that do not have a self-lighting feature. Check that all burners and oven are off when finished and before going out or retiring. Teach children how to properly use cooking equipment. Do not use flammable fuels to start a fire in a cook stove. For outdoor grills, use the starter fluids or electrical igniters made for that purpose.

When a fire occurs, assess the situation. Always give yourself a place to escape. If it is possible to safely turn off the electricity or gas feeding the fire, do so. If a pan is on fire, shut off the heat and tightly cover the fire with a lid. This should be done only if the fire is small. Never pour water on a pan fire involving grease, or try to carry it to the sink or outdoors.





If the above methods have failed, use a fire blanket, fire extinguisher or baking soda to put out the fire. When using a fire blanket, cover your hands with it and gently throw the blanket over the fire. Fire extinguishers should be sprayed at least one yard from the fire and aimed directly above the fire in the vapor area. Test the extinguisher before approaching the fire. Sweep it from side to side until the fire is out. Baking soda should be sprinkled or thrown onto the fire.

◆ **Food Safety**

Some flu symptoms may actually be mild cases of food poisoning. Food needs to be prepared, cooked and stored properly to ensure safety. Fresh foods need to be washed with water before cutting or eating. Follow the directions on package labels when handling meats. Always clean contaminated surfaces before putting something on them. If there is a question about the freshness of a food, discard it. Store eggs in the refrigerator for not more than three weeks after purchase. Wash the tops of cans before opening them.

In the event of a power outage, foods stored in the refrigerator and freezer will stay fresh for a period of time if the doors are left closed. A full, tightly packed freezer will stay frozen for 48 hours if the door is closed. A partially filled freezer will last for 24 hours. Any cooked foods that thaw should be eaten immediately or thrown away. Uncooked food that still has ice crystals on it or is still cold (40 degrees F) can be safely refrozen.

Following basic safety rules in the kitchen can help reduce the chance of fires, accidents and food poisonings. Make everyone who uses the kitchen aware of these rules and enforce them.

Keep flammable materials away from range or stove. If the stove is near a window, use short, flame-resistant curtains.



This Maine Farm Safety Fact Sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.



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